

**James Madison to Joseph Jones, December 5, 1780.
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TO JOSEPH JONES.¹

1 From the Madison Papers (1840).

Philadelphia, December 5, 1780.

Dear Sir, —I had yours of the twenty-fifth ultimo, by yesterday's post. I congratulate you on the deliverance of our country from the distresses of actual invasion. If any unusual forbearance has been shown by the British commanders, it has proceeded rather I presume, from a possibility that they may some time or other in the course of the war repossess what they have now abandoned, than from a real disposition to spare. The proceedings of the enemy to the southward prove that no general change of system has taken place in their military policy.

We had letters yesterday from Mr. Jay and Mr. Carmichael as late as the fourth and ninth of September. Mr. Jay informs us that it is absolutely necessary to cease drawing bills on him; that 150,000 dollars, to be repaid in three years, with some aid in clothing, &c., is all that the Court will advance for us. The general tenor of the letters is, that our affairs there make little progress, that the court is rather backward, that the navigation of the Mississippi is likely to prove a very serious difficulty; that Spain has herself been endeavouring to borrow a large sum in France on which she meant to issue a paper currency, that the terms and means used by her displeased Mr. Neckar, who in consequence threw such

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discouragements on it, as in turn were not very pleasing to the Spanish Minister; that Mr. Cumberland is still at Madrid laboring in concert with other secret emissaries of Britain to give unfavorable impressions of our affairs, that he is permitted to keep up a correspondence by his couriers with London, that if negotiations for peace should be instituted this winter, as Spain has not yet taken a decided part with regard to America, England will probably choose to make Madrid rather than Versailles the seat of it. However unfavorable many of these particulars may appear,

it is the concurrent representation of the above ministers that our disappointment of pecuniary succor at Madrid is to be imputed to the want of ability and not of inclination to supply us, that the steadiness of His Catholic Majesty is entirely confided in by the French Ambassador, and that the mysterious conduct of Mr. Cumberland and of the Court of Spain towards him, seems to excite no uneasiness in the Ambassador. The letters add, that, on the pressing remonstrances of France and Spain, Portugal had agreed to shut her ports against English prizes, but that she persisted in her refusal to accede to the armed neutrality.

The receipt of the foregoing intelligence has awakened the attention of the Georgia delegates to their motion, of which I informed you particularly by Col. Grayson. It has lain, ever since it was made, undisturbed on the table. This morning is assigned for the consideration of it, and I expect it will without fail be taken up. I do not believe Congress will adopt it without the express concurrence of all the States immediately interested. Both my principles and my instructions will determine me to oppose it. Virginia, and the United States in general, are too deeply interested in the subject of controversy to give it up, as long as there is a possibility of retaining it. And I have ever considered the mysterious and reserved behaviour of Spain, particularly her backwardness in the article of money, as intended to alarm us into concessions, rather than as the effect of a real indifference to our

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fate or to any alliance with us. I am very anxious, notwithstanding, to have an answer to my letter by Grayson.